

## **Landbeach Annual Parish Meeting**

**Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2007**

### **Chairman's Report**

Having just completed my first year as Chairman, I would first like to thank all my fellow councillors for their help and support over the year.

I would also like to thank councillors for the practical tasks they have done, such as litter removal; recently, 25 black bags were filled with litter from the verges around the village – thanks also to two parishioners (Neville Diver and Philip Galego) who joined Parish Councillors on a Sunday morning. We also planted more daffodils (thanks to Ged and John and the Landbeach Society) and this year they looked wonderful for several weeks. I would also particularly like to thank Anne Hinkins, the Parish Clerk, for her considerable efforts and efficiency. These days, the role of the clerk is increasingly demanding, with ever-changing rules and regulations and a huge amount of correspondence, both postal and email, to keep up with. To reflect this, we have recently increased Anne's hours to 9 hours per week.

We come to this meeting with the Parish Council unchanged from a year ago. At our AGM a couple of weeks ago, I was re-elected as Chairman and James Hockney as Vice-Chairman. Other continuing councillors are John Attwood, Trevor Dell, Ray Gambell, Jackie Gregg, Ged Hinkins and Alan Wyatt.

There is once again, one vacancy on the Parish Council and we would warmly welcome any parishioner who would like to join us.

We continue to work with our District Councillors, James Hockney and Peter Johnson, and our County Councillor, Michael Williamson.

#### **Landbeach web site**

The Parish Council now has its own page on the village website - [www.landbeach.org.uk](http://www.landbeach.org.uk). Here you will find news of Parish Council activities and the Minutes of Parish Council meetings can also be downloaded.

I would like to thank Jeff Bronks, the website editor, for providing this service to us free of charge.

### **Mobile library van**

Despite our efforts to maintain the fortnightly visits of the Mobile Library, there is likely to be some reduction in service next year. However, there will soon [from ~June] be further consultation on the proposed new routes.

### **Bus service**

It was good to see that the confusion about free bus passes was satisfactorily resolved and that (since 1<sup>st</sup> October 2006) pensioners and other concessions can now have a free bus pass for the whole of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Less happily, the Sunday bus service has recently been reduced to one bus to Cambridge in the morning and one back again in late afternoon.

### **Grass-Cutting**

The grass-cutting contract has been renewed with Truelink for another year. This is for cutting the verges within the village as well as the recreation ground. They also cut back the hedges around the rec once a year.

The County Council is responsible for cutting the verges outside the village envelope and the Parish Clerk will continue to liaise with Highways to ensure a good service.

### **Tree and Hedge work**

At the end of last year, we undertook removal of two diseased horse chestnut trees and some dead elms from the area opposite the church. In addition, a field maple was removed and the crown of another reduced due to the growth encroaching on the Village Hall.

Early this year, the hawthorn hedge near the Village Hall was replanted further back from the road to improve visibility at the Cock Fen Lane junction.

### **Parish Council Caretaker**

Geoff Setchell continues to do a very good job as village caretaker. He undertakes many tasks such as pruning trees, tidying the bus shelter and repainting benches and play equipment, often assisted by Peter Bloomfield. Geoff is now also completing a weekly checklist to ensure that any damage to play equipment and multi-sports area is noted.

### **Recreation ground**

The multi-sports and play area continue to be well-used by the children of the village. Milton Colts continue to use the football pitch and have again contributed to the cost of rolling it.

We are also progressing with some new equipment for the younger children of the village. A subcommittee was formed, comprising the clerk and several young mothers from the village, and good progress has been made with selection of equipment and grant applications. South Cambs Community Facility has offered us a grant of over £10,000 and a further application is being sent to Evolve. The Lynn Trust Fund has agreed to be the 10% third party funding body for the Evolve funding application.

### **Village Hall**

Our excellent village hall continues to be very well-used for many activities. Parish Council meetings, Play Group, Landbeach WI, the Landbeach Society, village lunches and teas, the social club and bar, exhibitions (eg Donarbon and Park+Ride) and many other activities from Carpet Bowls to Pilates all take place here. We are very lucky to have this resource and would like to thank the Village Hall Committee (now chaired by Colleen Dell) for managing it so well.

### **Major Roads and junctions**

The improvements to the Milton roundabout have improved traffic flow, especially at peak times. Further works at the Cowley Road junction and the Business Park are currently slowing things up again but should be finished soon.

The Slap-Up junction is a continued concern, especially for motorbikes. It is hoped that if/when the Rowing Lake project goes ahead that this junction will be improved under a Section 106 order.

The Park + Ride relocation to the area South of Butt Lane is due to go ahead and will, hopefully for just a short period, cause bottle necks at peak times.

### **Waste Management**

Donarbon are being granted the waste PFI [private finance initiative] contract [by CCC] for the next 28 years and now have approval to go ahead with a state-of-the-art Mechanical Biological Treatment (MBT) plant. This will take our black bin waste and separate out the metal and plastic before treating the rest of the waste biologically. As they already take the black bin waste for landfill, there should not be a significant increase in vehicle movements.

### **Affordable Housing - location**

It is disappointing to have to report little progress despite much discussion.

Walnut Farm is the most promising site but is still subject to an impasse between the County Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council Planning Department.

The County Council (County Farms Estate) own the land and are obligated to maximise their returns. Additional costs that must be borne include construction of a road to the new dwellings and provision for relocation of the existing big barn which is used by a tenant farmer.

South Cambs Planning have rejected previous suggested development plans - comprising 5 large private homes and 6 affordable homes, with the latter being situated mostly outside the village envelope – and would prefer a scheme offering just two large private houses

We as a Parish Council feel that there is need for a compromise.

The County Council have now [taken the project back in-house - from Hundred Houses] asked an external Planning Agent to produce a scheme that will maximise receipt for the County Council and secure affordable housing for Landbeach. Sara Thomas at the County Council is still waiting to hear from the agent.

### **Affordable Housing – level of interest**

The latest (2003) Housing survey indicated a continuing need for affordable housing for Landbeach people and the results of this survey are valid for 5 years. Figures from the current Housing Register also indicate strong demand from people with a local connection.

[Note: Sara Thomas will soon be leaving the County Council and this project may come back to Stephen Conrad.]

### **Granary**

The County Council (at their cabinet meeting in April) have declared the granary and big barn at Worts Farm as 'surplus to requirement' and said they will be sold, with the County Council again seeking to maximise their return. [The money from the sale will be 'ring-fenced' and used towards a central distribution facility]

An agent will assess the planning potential. As the granary is listed and has a unique structure, any development will have to satisfy the South Cambs conservation officer. The access to the site will also be of concern to Highways.

As there is a possibility that the granary will be protected from major modification and may therefore not have a high market value, I have registered an interest in the granary on behalf of the village.

### **Traffic in the village and possibility for calming measures**

Many people in the village would like to see some form of traffic calming in the village. However, as our accident data is low, we have no chance of securing funding. In fact, the County Council has almost no funds for 2007/2008 for minor traffic management measures, apart from a few previously approved schemes.

However, Highway measures can be funded by third parties if they are consistent with the County Council's policies and objectives.

A Landbeach parishioner recently drew up a proposed scheme for the village (\*) and this was forwarded to CCC South Highways for their comments and costings.

They responded that:

Each interactive sign would cost £6,000.00 to include maintenance for its lifetime.

Lifetime expectancy is about 6 years, anything over is a bonus

Each build-out ('pinch point') as on the plan would cost £9,000.00

A raised table at crossroads would cost £10,000.00. The plan suggested a mini roundabout but these are not appropriate where four roads cross.

We now need to decide which measures, if any, are necessary or desirable enough now to seek alternative funding for their implementation.

Options for short-term action: do nothing, go for interactive signs only, go for interactive signs plus build-outs, go for some other suggestion.

Options for funding: outside funding, Parish funding

### **Parish Plans:**

There is a Government push to greater "bottom-up democracy" and core to this is the Parish Plan, drawn up by members of each local parish to reflect its needs.

This plan encompasses not just spatial planning but also plans for the development of the community.

Back in January we included an insert (thanks to Ray Gambell) in the parish magazine which gave a brief summary of the purpose of a Parish Plan and invited parishioners to provide feedback.

Anne received 16 replies on the response slips sent out to parishioners with the parish magazine. Of the 16 replies, 15 thought a Parish Plan was a good idea and 10 would like to learn more. There were just 4 offers to help develop a plan.

1 respondent did not think Landbeach needed a plan as it was small enough to conduct its own affairs, though he thought larger village would benefit.

Anne and I attended a conference on Parish Planning and gained greater understanding of what is involved in producing a Parish Plan – commitment, chairman with energy, members (maybe 9 or 10), continuous follow-up. We also learned that Parishes which have already completed a Parish Plan have mixed opinions of the benefits.

Options for action:

1. do nothing

2. appoint a chairman (non Parish Council) and committee (8 or 9 people, including 2 parish councillors) and proceed with a full Parish Plan
3. go for simpler Landbeach Action Plan produced by the Parish Council, publish it on the website (with paper copies available as required) and update and extend it according to feedback provided by parishioners to the Parish Council

### **Finally**

I have talked for long enough but would just like to mention a couple of things.

Firstly, the village can now enjoy a warm and updated All Saints' Church, following successful completion of the North Porch and new heating system project earlier this year.

Secondly, a date for people's diaries – there will be a Village Fete here on 14 July.

We are lucky to live in such a fine village and even more fortunate that there are many people prepared to put time and effort into running things and making things happen.

-- Melanie Hale